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ABSTRACT

CEDEFOP's (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training) work on the development of the European dimension in the training of vocational guidance practitioners took place in two stages. The first was the survey of the work and training of guidance practitioners in each Member State of the European Community. Findings indicated differences in three areas: (1) number of guidance-related occupations in each Member State, (2) whether guidance was mainly the responsibility of specialists or a part of the responsibility of other professionals, and (3) the extent to which these two group worked together. The country studies served as the basis for the synthesis report for the next stage of CEDEFOP's work in this field. CEDEFOP drew up guidelines for the training of staff in the European dimension of their work. This work started by describing a national basic training onto which continuing training in European aspects of guidance could be built. This framework was in the form of a list of learning objectives with suggestions for content, methods, and media. CEDEFOP work was linked to the PETRA II program, which promotes collaboration in vocational training for young adults. Phase 1 consisted largely of setting up national projects and establishing transnational links within three main national clusters. The CEDEFOP materials were presented at a workshop at the third European Conference on Computers in Careers Guidance. Workshop members recommended development of training materials at the national level that are based on CEDEFOP's learning objectives. (YLB)

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF A EUROPEAN DIMENSION IN THE TRAINING OF GUIDANCE PRACTITIONERS

Background

1 The opening of national borders within the European Community, for the free movement of students, trainees and workers in January 1993, has brought the work of vocational guidance practitioners into a prominent role. This role has two equally important components: to promote movement itself (and help in the development of a greatly enriched labour market), and also to ensure equality of opportunity throughout the Community. At present, the delivery of guidance in the twelve Member States varies considerably, not just in the amount of resources available for it, but in how it is provided (within employment services or educational systems), where the services are located, the structure of the services, and the training and professional ethos of the practitioners. Given this diversity, how can European agencies help to develop guidance practice throughout the Community?

2 CEDEFOP Flash 2/91 describes CEDEFOP's work in the development of guidance, and its context in terms of the projects initiated by the European Commission. These have included a survey of guidance provision for young people which was published in 1988 (a second survey, covering also provision for adults, will be published in 1993). The Commission has sponsored a series of international conferences on computers in careers guidance, the third of which was held in Nuremberg in November 1992; and it has co-ordinated the development of a handbook on vocational information and guidance in the Member States. The significance of guidance is now also acknowledged in the Commission's PETRA II programme, described below.

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3 CEDEFOP's own work has focused on the analysis of the actual work of guidance practitioners in the Member States, and in anticipating the additional training which practitioners will need in the new Europe. This Flash describes the results of these recent CEDEFOP initiatives in the guidance field, and shows how they relate to, and support, the other European guidance activities.

Occupational Profiles of Vocational Counsellors

4 CEDEFOP's work so far on the development of the European dimension in the training of guidance practitioners has taken place in two stages. The first of these was the survey of the work and training of guidance practitioners in each Member State, which was summarised in Watts, A.G., Occupational Profiles of Vocational Counsellors in the European Community. Berlin: CEDEFOP 1992[1] (a study in line with a larger pilot programme to look at the comparability of vocational training qualifications in the Member States more generally). As was to be expected, the study found that the number of guidance-related occupations in each Member State varies considerably. It also found further differences between those countries, for example in whether guidance is mainly the responsibility of specialists or whether it is part of the responsibility of other professionals, and the extent to which these two groups work together.

5 In each of the twelve country studies, the work of guidance practitioners is analysed against an agreed list of nineteen guidance 'tasks', divided into seven clusters: information management, work with individuals, work with groups, placement, follow-up, networking, and managing. The country studies describe the training and qualifications which practitioners receive, both initially and in-service, to help them with these tasks. To illuminate national differences and similarities, each country study reports in depth on the work and training of three key occupations. The country studies also describe the extent to which a European dimension has entered into the work of guidance practitioners, and into their training.

6 The country studies served as the basis for the synthesis report, and thus for the next stage of CEDEFOP's work in this field. But they also constitute an important contribution in themselves to the resources available to guidance workers practising within Europe:

[1] published in English, French, Italian, German and Spanish

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as well as the details already mentioned, they contain information on the education and employment service contexts of guidance, on the structure of provision, and on current trends influencing developments. (The studies are available separately from CEDEFOP in their original language, as well as either English or French.)

7 On the basis of these individual studies, the synthesis report was able to identify five main types of guidance practitioner to be found in the Member States (guidance counsellor, guidance teacher, guidance psychologist, placement officer, and information officer), and give an overall picture of the significance of each of the tasks within their work. The work of the individual practitioners within these groups varied according to the client groups with which they worked (for example, guidance counsellors might work with young people, students, adults, or the disabled) and the context in which they did it (such as in or out of school or university, in employment services, or in private bureaux). The synthesis report also confirmed three more general trends which recurred across the whole Community: that guidance was increasingly seen as a continuous process throughout school and carrying on through adult life; the existence of a move towards a more open professional model, in which guidance specialists work as much through collaboration with other professionals or non-specialist agencies; and the fact that a greater emphasis was now put on the individual client as an active agent within the guidance process.

Continuing Training in the European Dimension of Guidance

8 On the basis of the task analysis in the occupational profile report, CEDEFOP's next activity in this field has been to draw up guidelines for the training of staff in the European dimension of their work. Because every Member State is different in the ways described above, this work had to start from describing a notional basic training onto which continuing training in European aspects of guidance could be built (Continuing Training Modules on a European Dimension: Modules on Counselling Methods. Berlin: CEDEFOP 1992). This framework is offered in the form of a list of learning objectives. The list is structured so as to follow the seven task clusters used in the occupational profile studies, and, drawing on American and Canadian, as well as European material, outlines the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to carry out those tasks competently. The document also contains suggestions for content, methods and media, and may therefore be useful to those Member States which are at present designing national initial training programmes for their own generalist guidance staff.

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9 As an introduction to the framework of learning objectives, this report contains a comparison between the training needs of vocational counsellors, on the one hand, and EUROTRAIN, the training programme drawn up for European employment advisers within the EURES system on the other. It also discusses the distinction and overlap between the tasks associated with information management (the 'content' of guidance) and the tasks associated with work with individuals (the 'method', or counselling skills used in guidance). These were the two groups of tasks identified as central by all professional groups in the study of occupational profiles.

10 From this outline of the specific knowledge, skills and attitudes of basic guidance work at a national level, it is possible to clarify more precisely the differences between that and work at a European level. CEDEFOP has now drafted a detailed analysis of this European dimension (Ertelt, B.-J., Köditz, V., and Chomé, G.: Recommendations on the Continuing Training of Vocational Counsellors on a European Dimension. Berlin: CEDEFOP 1992), linking it closely to the learning objectives and contents of the basic training framework. For example, within the area of work ('tasks clusters' in the occupational profile study) of information management, six learning objectives were identified for the basic training. Two additional learning objectives relating to European work, involving the use of reference materials, and making and using contacts in other Member States, have been added to these. Advice on content and method is also included for these objectives, building on experience in Denmark in providing in-service training to guidance practitioners (Plant, P.: 'Training of guidance staff: the European Dimension'; unpublished CEDEFOP working paper, May 1992).

11 These modules and recommendations were discussed in draft form at a conference held by CEDEFOP in Berlin in October 1992, attended by experts from the Member States and representatives from relevant agencies at a European level: the PETRA programme, EUROTRAIN and EUROCOUNSEL, a programme for the long-term unemployed based at the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions in Dublin. As well as agreeing the structure and contents of the CEDEFOP documents, participants at this event confirmed the need for these programmes to collaborate and co-ordinate their work wherever possible.

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Diversity or a Single System?

12 For people with the responsibility of designing training to meet their own local or national needs, the advantage of CEDEFOP's approach is that it can be used to clarify those needs against existing provision. Within Action III of the PETRA programme it is already being used by some Member States to act as the basis for designing a complete training programme; but it is also being used by others as a checklist to identify which elements are covered in the initial training of the staff in question, and which should be added in order to bring them to the level of competence necessary for European-wide work. It thus respects national and even local differences of need as well as provision. However, as more countries use this framework as a basis for revising and developing their training, and if they work together to modify and adapt the model, there is some possibility that in spite of the contextual differences, all may at least move towards a more standardised European model of guidance training.

Links with Action III of the PETRA programme

13 The work of this second stage of CEDEFOP's work was completed in October 1992, in time for the start of work under the first phase of Action III of the PETRA II programme. The PETRA programme itself, to run from January 1992 to December 1994, promotes collaborative projects in vocational training for young people between 16 and 28. Action III consists of two types of project: one for the establishing of a network of national resource centres to support European vocational guidance, and the other to develop appropriate training programmes for guidance staff. Within this Action, each Member State receives funding at a national level for one or two projects of each type, with a requirement to collaborate with similar projects in the other states. There are clear links between the CEDEFOP work and both activities under Action III, but it has a particular relevance to the training projects.

14 The PETRA training projects were drawn up to meet the particular needs of guidance practitioners in individual countries. Some aim to redesign initial training programmes to include a European dimension; some address the training needs of guidance trainers; some will draw up continuing training modules for general guidance staff; some are designing training for European specialists; some are working at a more general level of competence analysis for European work; and a number address more than one of these. Phase 1 of this work consists largely of setting up national projects and establishing transnational links within three main national

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clusters. The CEDEFOP materials provide either a starting point, or a basis for comparison, for all of the approaches found in the programme; at a meeting of project managers in Rome in December 1992, one of the clusters decided to draw up training modules based explicitly on the CEDEFOP model, but the other two will be using the model in ways that support their different approaches.

Recommendations from the European conference in Nuremberg

15 The CEDEFOP materials were also presented at a workshop at the third European conference on Computers in Careers Guidance, held in Nuremberg in November 1992. This workshop was attended by thirty participants, and revealed a considerable interest at a local level in training in the European dimension of guidance. As well as participants from the twelve Member States, the event was attended by representatives from European countries outside the Community. All present agreed that the European dimension would have to include work with clients interested in moving into, and out from, the present Member States of the single market, and take into account the different 'mobility status' of guidance clients.

16 The importance of networking between countries was acknowledged by all, both at the level of institutions, and at the level of individual practitioners. Equally important was the need to work closely with the national resource centres. The current trend for transnational collaborative projects, and the sharing of the experience of guidance workers in border regions, were both welcomed. In addition the members of the workshop made four specific recommendations for future work to promote the European dimension of guidance:

(a) The setting up of a central resource centre to support national training programmes.

(b) The setting up of a central system to facilitate exchanges between practitioners.

(c) The setting up of a forum, possibly developing into a European Academy, in which practitioners as well as experts could exchange ideas and develop practice.

(d) The development at national level of open-learning training materials building on CEDEFOP's analysis of the learning objectives for the European dimension of guidance work.

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17 The full conference at Nuremberg made a number of more general recommendations to support the development of guidance within Europe, of which the following is a summary:

(a) Guidance provision should aim to help the individual with his or her learning and career decisions, but should at the same time help maintain the client's own active role in, and responsibility for, those decisions. Guidance should be concerned with trends in national and European labour markets, as well as with decisions about the occupation itself. It should meet the needs both of people who are already aware of European opportunities, and seek more information about them; and also raise the awareness of those who have not yet considered the possibility of working or studying in another Member State. Guidance should address issues of career planning, as well as solve more immediate problems surrounding the client's present employment. Co-operation over guidance provision in border areas plays an important role as a pacemaker, and should be actively developed.

(b) Computer-assisted guidance systems have proved successful. They should be expanded and improved. In particular:

both large and small computer-assisted guidance systems are of value, and both should be developed and tested by Member States, working collaboratively;

standardised quality control system should be developed for the testing and approval of computer-assisted guidance; this should operate in the form of a seal of quality indicating that the system meets basic criteria set by the European Commission.

(c) Further measures should be taken for the Europeanisation of vocational counselling. In order to strengthen the European dimension of guidance required by the Single European market, it will be necessary both to increase organisational co-operation between guidance services, and to encourage more flexible co-operation between guidance practitioners. In order to achieve these, there are a number of measures available at Community level. These include:

the continuation and extension of Action III of the PETRA programme;

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the addition of a guidance dimension to other educational and training programmes funded by the European Commission.

There are also a number of measures that can be taken at national level, with help from the Commission. These include:

the development of careers education programmes with a European dimension in schools and colleges;

the development of materials to support the European dimension of guidance;

improved qualifications for guidance workers through both training and exchange programmes.

18 A number of specific suggestions were made in relation to the above recommendations.

(a) Information:

the continued development of the European guidance handbook, and its regular updating;

the development and improvement of transnational access to computerised information systems, and the harmonisation of standards and norms.

(b) Partnership and co-operation:

innovatory measures, to include: a permanent forum for the discussion and development of training; international panels of experts able to act as guidance consultants; regular international meetings of guidance practitioners;

the continuation of existing co-operative transnational projects;

the regular reporting and exchange of experience about models of co-operation in border regions;

exchange programmes for guidance practitioners which carry recognition for career development purposes at a national level

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(c) Initial and continuing training:

the expansion of initial and continuing training in the European dimension of guidance work, on the basis of an analysis of existing practice and needs in the Member States;

the development of training programmes which address the needs of general guidance workers, specialist in European guidance, and guidance practitioners who work close to borders;

the incorporation of the national European information centres, being set up as part of Action III of the PETRA programme, into the training and staff development of guidance workers;

the establishment of a European Guidance Academy.

19 In short, the conference report acknowledged the central part that will be played by guidance services in the Single European Market and any enlargement of it, and the demands that will be placed on them by it over the coming years.

'An area without internal borders is emerging in which the free movement of goods, persons, capital and services is ensured. Of the 340 million citizens of the 12 Member States 130 million are young people under 25 years of age. For them in particular expanded possibilities and opportunities with regard to education and vocational training are opening up. The Single European Market intensifies the likelihood of movement in the direction of a European Education and Training Area, and the development of a European labour market.'

Thus the Nuremberg conference as a whole, like the training workshop, stressed the importance and urgency of training for guidance practitioners in the European dimension of their work.

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